Inmate Mail

1007.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for receiving, sending, inspecting, censoring, and rejecting inmate mail.

1007.2 POLICY

This office will provide inmates ample opportunity to send and receive mail, subject to restriction when there is a legitimate government interest in security, order, and rehabilitation.

Inmates incarcerated in the Thurston County Corrections Facility will receive scanned copies of incoming Correspondence.

1007.3 MAIL GENERALLY

Inmates may, at their own expense, send and receive mail without restrictions on quantity, provided it does not jeopardize the safety of members, visitors, or other inmates, or pose an unreasonable disruption to orderly correctional facility operations.

The Chief Deputy of Corrections or the authorized designee may allow inmates to correspond with other inmates in this correctional facility, as well as in other jails or correctional institutions, as long as the mail is sent and received through the U.S. Postal Service.

Inmates are authorized to store mail and writing materials in their cells in an amount determined by the Chief Deputy of Corrections. Excess writing materials and mail, including confidential mail, will be seized, inventoried, and retained pending disposition according to the correctional facility procedures regarding excess property (see the Searches Policy).

1007.4 SUSPENSION/RESTRICTION OF MAIL PRIVILEGES

Mail privileges may be suspended or restricted upon approval of the Chief Deputy of Corrections whenever members become aware of:

(a) Mail sent by an inmate that involves threats of violence against any member of the government, judiciary, legal representatives, victims, or witnesses.

(b) Incoming or outgoing mail representing a threat to correctional facility security, members, or the public.

The Prosecuting Attorney or Prosecuting Attorney should be consulted when criminal charges are considered against an inmate or there is an apparent liability risk to the Office that relates to suspension or restriction of mail privileges.

1007.5 PROCESSING AND INSPECTION OF MAIL

Incoming Mail

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(a) Incoming mail will be inspected to intercept monies sent to inmates and electronically scanned to prevent the introduction of contraband into the facility or other potential safety and security issues.

(b) Guidelines governing inmate correspondence shall be made available to all members, inmates and the public.

(c) The return address on all outgoing mail from the Thurston County Corrections Facility (TCCF) will read as follows: Inmate's Full Name, c/o Thurston County Corrections Facility, 2000 Lakeridge Dr. SW Olympia, WA 98502.

(d) The Reception Corrections Technician (CT), or other Reception staff, will sort incoming mail verifying if the inmate(s) are still in-custody and their current housing location. They will write the property number on the outside of the envelope.

(e) The Reception Corrections Technician (CT) will place mail pending scanning in the designated area in reception. Reception Staff will conduct electronic scanning. Any money, money orders, or items to be distributed to an inmate will be clearly marked with name and housing unit by the Reception Corrections Technician and routed to the inmate(s) for signature and processing.

When mail is found to be inappropriate in accordance with the provisions of this policy or when an inmate is sent material that is not prohibited by law but is considered contraband by the facility, the material may be returned to the sender or held in the inmate's property to be given to the inmate upon release.

Correspondence between inmates must be approved by the Inmate Services Sergeant and will not go through the regular mail system. These letters will be no more than two (2) pages in length. Letters will not be delivered to intended recipients and inmates will receive a denial letter if this mail exceeds the two-page limit.

Inmates shall be notified in writing whenever their mail is held or returned to the sender. In addition to the inmate notice, a copy fo the rejections notice will be placed in the inmate's property.

1007.5.1 NONCONFIDENTIAL MAIL

Assigned members should open and inspect all incoming and outgoing general mail of current inmates. Mail for inmates no longer in custody should not be opened and should be forwarded (see the Forwarding of Mail section of this policy).

Only members designated by the Chief Deputy of Corrections are authorized to read incoming and outgoing nonconfidential mail of current inmates. These members should receive training on legitimate government interests for reading and censoring mail and other legal requirements related to inmate mail.

Incoming mail should be read as deemed necessary to maintain correctional facility security and order or to monitor a particular problem.

Outgoing mail may not be sealed by the inmate and may be read by members when:

(a) There is reason to believe the mail would:

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1. Interfere with the orderly operation of the correctional facility.
2. Be threatening to the recipient.
3. Facilitate criminal activity.

(b) The inmate is on a restricted mail list.

(c) The mail is between inmates.

(d) The envelope has an incomplete return address.

1007.5.2 CONFIDENTIAL MAIL

Inmates may correspond confidentially with courts, legal counsel, officials of this office, elected officials, jail inspectors, government officials, or officers of the court.

The correctional facility will also accept and deliver a fax or interoffice mail from these entities.

Outgoing and incoming confidential mail shall be processed by members who have received special training in inspecting confidential documents and who are accountable for maintaining confidentiality. Such members may inspect incoming and outgoing confidential mail for contraband, limiting the inspection to a search for physical items that may be included in addition to the mail and shall not read, scan, or copy the mail. Any inspection shall be completed in the presence of the inmate.

1007.5.3 BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

Publications, magazines, and books are not accepted at TCCF. Newspapers shall be accepted only if they are mailed directly from the publisher to a named inmate.

1007.6 CENSORSHIP OR REJECTION OF INCOMING AND OUTGOING NONCONFIDENTIAL MAIL

In determining whether to censor or reject a specific piece of incoming nonconfidential mail, consideration shall be given to whether censoring or rejecting the material is rationally related to a legitimate government interest, whether alternate means of communicating with an inmate are available, and the impact of allowing the material into the correctional facility upon members and inmates.

Outgoing nonconfidential mail shall only be censored to further a substantial government interest, and only when it is necessary to address the particular government interest. Government interests that justify censorship or rejection of outgoing mail include:

(a) Maintaining correctional facility security.

(b) Preventing dangerous conduct, such as an escape plan.

(c) Preventing ongoing criminal activity, such as threats of blackmail or extortion.

(d) Preventing harassment of those who have requested that no mail be sent to them by the inmate.

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Mail identified for censorship or rejection shall be delivered to the Chief Deputy of Corrections, who shall decide the disposition of such mail.

Censored mail should be redacted and a copy of the unredacted mail should be kept (see the Documenting Rejected or Censored Mail, Books, and Periodicals section of this policy).

Rejected mail shall be handled according to the correctional facility's established procedures regarding inmate personal property or returned to the sender.

Notice shall be given to the inmate sender or to the inmate recipient and sent to the sender of censored or rejected mail, unless such notification jeopardizes any investigation or correctional facility security.

1007.6.1 DOCUMENTING REJECTED OR CENSORED MAIL, BOOKS, AND PERIODICALS
In each case where it is necessary to reject or censor mail, a written record must be made of such action, to include:

(a) The inmate's name and number.

(b) A description or an unredacted copy of the mail, as applicable.

(c) A description of the action taken and the reason for such action.

(d) The disposition of the item involved.

(e) The member's signature.

(f) Notification to the inmate and the sender, including the date and method by which they were notified (e.g., in person, by letter).

1007.7 FORWARDING OF MAIL

Any non-legal mail received for a former inmate should be returned to the sender with a notation that the inmate is not in custody. Obvious legal mail should be forwarded to the former inmate's new address if it is reasonably known. Otherwise, legal mail should be returned to the sender.

1007.8 WRITING MATERIALS FOR INDIGENT INMATES

Indigent inmates shall receive writing materials on a weekly basis, pursuant to a schedule established by the Chief Deputy of Corrections. Writing materials should include the following:

(a)
- At least two pre-stamped envelopes for correspondence with family and friends
- Six sheets of writing paper
- One pencil

Indigent inmates shall receive an amount of pre-stamped envelopes and writing paper sufficient to correspond with courts, legal counsel, officials of this office, elected officials, jail inspectors, government officials, or officers of the court (see the Inmate Access to Courts and Counsel Policy). Requests for additional writing materials shall be screened and granted based on need, as determined by the Chief Deputy of Corrections or the authorized designee.

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